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SUBJECT: BAN AND ASO DISCUSS MISSILE LAUNCH, EEZ, FUTURE
MEETING

REF: SEOUL 1433

Classified By: A/POL Sung Y. Kim. Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) In a June 20 telephone conversation, Japan Foreign Minister Taro Aso and ROK Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon shared concern over the possible DPRK missile test. Aso asserted that Japan would work with the U.S. to take a tough response in the event of a launch. Ban said that the ROK wanted to control the situation in order to maintain peace and stability. Turning to the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), Aso requested that the ROK not conduct maritime research in July as planned because such activity could provoke a strong reaction in Japan. Aso said it would be important for both sides to exercise self-restraint. Finally, Aso invited Ban to visit Tokyo in July. Ban replied that he would "positively consider" the invitation. END SUMMARY.

RESPONDING TO A DPRK MISSILE LAUNCH

¶2. (C) According to Japan Embassy First Secretary Kenichi Okada, Foreign Minister Aso and Foreign Minister Ban both expressed concern regarding the continuing DPRK missile situation in a June 20 telephone conversation. Aso said that Japan had warned North Korea against launching the missile and urged North Korea to return to the Six Party Talks without preconditions. At that time DPRK could talk directly to the U.S. about all related issues, Aso said. A missile launch would threaten the stability of the region; violate the 2002 Pyongyang Declaration; and conflict with the September 19 Joint Statement. Japan would work with the U.S. and would take a tough response, including a resolution at the UN Security Council.

¶3. (C) Ban replied that the ROK was also concerned about the missile situation and conveyed its concerns to North Korea on the June 15 in Gwangju. Ban said that a missile launch would affect inter-Korean relations to some extent. The ROK wanted to control the situation in order to maintain peace and stability on the Peninsula and to minimize the situation's impact on the economy. It would be important to keep North Korea on track with the Six Party Talks. Ban said the ROK would continue its engagement policy with North Korea. Meanwhile, Ban thanked Aso for sending a strong message to the North Koreans through their Beijing channel.

¶4. (C) Kim Tae-jin, Deputy Director of North American Division I, generally confirmed the portion of the conversation regarding the possible DPRK missile launch, though according to Kim's account, Ban said that a missile launch would "greatly influence North-South relations." Kim pointed out that Ban's conversation with Secretary Rice, which took place one hour after the conversation with Aso, was much more specific with regard to potential countermeasures in the event of a missile launch.

ASO ASKS ROK TO REFRAIN FROM JULY EEZ RESEARCH

¶5. (C) Aso told Ban that he appreciated the last discussion on the EEZ (reftel), which was "good, meaningful and serious." Because the negotiations created a good chance to follow up on all related aspects of the issue, it would be important to continue along the current tide of dialogue. Aso requested South Korea not to conduct maritime research in the EEZ in July. If South Korea conducted the research, then there would be a big reaction in Japan, and some Japanese would argue that Japan should also conduct research immediately. The situation could quickly become more serious than April's situation. Aso expressed hope that the two countries could enter consultations on a cooperative framework for maritime research.

¶6. (C) Ban said that not much progress was made during the last negotiation, but it was still a meaningful discussion and he hoped there would be another round in September, as agreed previously. Ban said he had nothing to add to what he said in Qatar (NOTE: According to Okada, Ban told Aso in Qatar that if Japan "made a fuss" over the maritime research,

it would only make it harder for MOFAT to defuse the situation. END NOTE.). Ban said he was not in a position to accept the tentative framework proposal. Ban said, however, that he would make great efforts to maintain good and stable bilateral relations. Aso said it would be important for both sides to exercise self-restraint so as not to create a tense situation. Ban said he understood. MOFAT appeared reluctant to discuss the portion of the conversation regarding Japan-ROK relations.

ASO INVITES BAN TO JAPAN

¶7. (C) Aso invited Ban to visit Japan in July. Ban expressed appreciation and said he would "positively consider" the invitation. The Ministers agreed that they would work through diplomatic channels to schedule a date.

VERSHBOW